

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY

REMARKS QUOTED ON ABC-TV PROGRAM, "ABC WORLD NEWS SUNDAY"

KIGALI, RWANDA

JULY 31, 1994

CAROLE SIMPSON: Defense Secretary William Perry got a firsthand, up-close look at the plight of Rwandan refugees today when he visited the Rwandan capital of Kigali and a crowded and dirty refugee camp in nearby Zaire. American soldiers who arrived in Kigali today have gotten the airport there ready for round-the-clock relief operations. They're mobilizing as rapidly as they can, since it appears their biggest enemy right now is time.

Here's ABC's Sheila MacVicar.

SHEILA MACVICAR: At Migunga camp today there was food and water and even a little laughter from the children. After two dismal weeks there is a difference you can see. And Secretary of Defense William Perry came to

Goma today to see for himself and to thank American soldiers here for the work they are doing.

SECRETARY PERRY: This is a tough assignment out here.

SOLDIER: It definitely is a tough assignment.

SECRETARY PERRY: Nothing could be more important than what you're doing.

SOLDER: That's true.

MACVICAR: In Goma, American soldiers are already pumping the clean water desperately needed to help people stay healthy. The Air Force will fly in some of the tanker trucks needed to get the water to more refugees. And across the border in Rwanda's capital, Kigali, American troops arrived this morning to set up their operation at the airport. More planes and troops arrive tomorrow, the beginning of what will be a massive airlift. The Secretary of Defense says their role will be strictly defined.

SECRETARY PERRY: The role of the American forces here are humanitarian, providing the relief supplies. We do not have combat forces here; therefore we're not in the position to provide peacekeeping support.

MACVICAR: There's no word yet how many American soldiers will end up in Kigali or how long they will stay.

The U.S. aid arriving in Kigali will be trucked 80 miles down the road to the refugees in Goma. The single-strip airport at Goma is simply overwhelmed. It is already operating at maximum capacity. And to help the aid agencies help the refugees, the military need to bring in more food and equipment fast. But on a day when Secretary Perry said, "We have turned the corner here," more than a thousand Rwandan refugees died in the camps. That shows just how far there is still to go. Sheila MacVicar, ABC News, Goma, Zaire.

WASHINGTON POST

First U.S. Unit Starts Refitting Kigali Airport

Perry Stresses American Role To Be Relief, Not Peacekeeping

By Steve Vogel
Special to The Washington Post

KIGALI, Rwanda, July 31—The first large contingent of U.S. troops on a humanitarian mission to war-torn Rwanda arrived in this capital today as American and Rwandan officials sought to ease fears that the Americans could be drawn into combat, as they were in Somalia last year.

Defense Secretary William J. Perry visited Kigali and the Zairian border town of Goma, the center of international efforts to aid Rwandan refugees. On a swift trip to demonstrate U.S. concern, he stressed the humanitarian nature of the American effort.

"This is a very important mission to the future

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, also visiting Kigali today, said the increasing capacity for the delivery of relief supplies is "quite positive, especially with the U.S. military coming in to deal with airlift, but at the same time, it is far from adequate."

Although he did not visit the teeming refugee camps in the outskirts of Goma, where an estimated 1.2 million displaced Rwandans are concentrated, Perry passed hundreds of suffering people sitting on rocks and bare ground, the Associated Press reported.

"My heart was torn by the human tragedy that is unfolding here," he said.

Perry predicted that "some components" of the American mission will continue "for a year or longer." Nevertheless, he said he was encouraged by optimistic reports from relief workers. The two operations spurring the most hope, he said, are the Kigali airlift and the U.S. water purification project in Goma.

In an interview on CBS-TV's "Face the Nation," Perry said that within a few weeks there will be about 3,000 American troops in the region, but

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of where we go as a nation," Perry said in Kigali. "There are two schools of thought in the U.S. Congress, one that perhaps we should be more isolationist and not involve ourselves in operations of this nature, and those of us who feel as leader of the free world we should be involved."

Hours before Perry spoke, a giant U.S. Air Force C-5 Galaxy landed here with personnel to run the airport, along with forklifts, Humvees and other equipment needed to unload aircraft.

The 200-troop deployment is the first phase of a growing U.S. effort to help end the crisis created by the flight of Rwandans from the three-month civil war and feared ethnic slaughter in their homeland. On July 18, the Tutsi-led rebels declared victory over the Hutu government in the war and established a new government.

The Clinton administration announced the deployment last week amid concern in Congress that the soldiers' humanitarian work could become a military peacekeeping mission if fighting again erupts in Rwanda.

Perry and other U.S. officials repeatedly emphasized today that U.S. troops will not engage in peacekeeping in Rwanda, and at a joint news conference in Kigali, the prime minister of the new Rwandan government, Faustin Twagiramungu, said, "We have to assure the Americans that this operation has nothing to do with what happened in Somalia." Twagiramungu expressed gratitude for the U.S. relief mission, saying, "We want this operation to be a real success."

He reiterated the government's pledge that re-

only a few hundred in Rwanda.

He said there are "inherent dangers" for Americans working in a country just emerging from a civil war, but that the U.S. troops had been received warmly in Rwanda. "There is no hostility at all," he said.

French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur said during a visit to Goma today that to avoid possible destabilization, French troops might stay in the "safe zone" they established for refugees in southwest Rwanda beyond the expiration of their U.N. mandate Aug. 22, Reuter reported. "We will not withdraw unless we have the feeling that the zone . . . will remain safe after our departure," he said.

The caution with which the United States is entering Rwanda was immediately apparent in Kigali today. Although Canadian and other U.N. troops are free to travel in the city without flak jackets or weapons, arriving U.S. airmen were told they would be confined indefinitely to the airport.

"Do not expect to go off the airfield for a while," Air Force Lt. Col. Ronald Peck, the U.S. mission commander in Kigali, told the new arrivals.

The troops also were warned to stay on the paved runways and aprons because of danger

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turning refugees—mostly Hutus who fled the country in fear of retaliation for the massacre of hundreds of thousands of Tutsis by Hutu militias—would be safe.

"We are not going to get into a trap of revenge, retribution or reprisal," he said. But he promised that those responsible for war crimes would be put on trial.

Twagiramungu pointed to one crucial difference between Rwanda and Somalia, where civil war led to anarchy. "We have a government here," he said.

While much of Kigali's previous population of 350,000 has vanished—dead, missing or in refugee camps—residents are slowly returning in an atmosphere of calm. Few cars move on the trash-strewn streets, but pedestrians frequent the occasional open shop.

Broken glass and sandbags are testimony to the fierce fighting that raged around the airport and through the city until just weeks ago. But the arriving American force has set up camp on the second and third floors of the airport with no difficulty.

A 54-person Air Force team from the 436th Airlift Wing at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware scrambled to get set up and operating within four hours of landing. Runway lighting was quickly repaired.

"This is a 24-hour-a-day operating airport from this point on," Perry said.

from unexploded mortar shells or mines. "Do not step off into the grass," Peck said. "If you do, there's potential you could get hurt."

A military explosives team will begin clearing fields around the airport soon, Peck said.

The initial 200-person U.S. force should be in place in Kigali "over the next two days," Peck said.

Officers with the U.N. headquarters in Kigali described the capital as calm. "The situation has changed quite dramatically in the last 25 days," said Canadian Army Lt. Col. Mike Harahan.

"I believe that Rwanda today is safer than it has been at any time since the civil war began in 1990," said the U.S. ambassador to Rwanda, David Rawson, who returned to Kigali a week ago.

U.S. military civil engineers and soldiers trained in environmental health are expected in Kigali soon to assist in rebuilding the city's infrastructure, including getting electricity and water running again.

"I think the American people can be very proud of the many lives that will be saved by virtue of this operation," said Rep. Donald M. Payne (D-N.J.), who also visited Kigali today.